

Impressions from Japan: A Translation and Analysis of the Work of Lafcadio Hearn

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

The intention of this thesis is to establish the relationship between the content of the works of Lafcadio Hearn and his impressions of Japan. I utilized two of Hearn's works on Japan: *Kwaidan*, a collection of ghost stories, and *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*. The process for establishing the thesis involves three parts: the first is a description of the life and works of Lafcadio Hearn; the second, a translation of a few short stories contained in *Kwaidan* from Japanese into English; and the third, an analysis of these short stories that compares their content to some topics delineated by Hearn in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*. These topics include family structure, religion, and social structure. Folktales offer a unique perspective into the culture from which they originate, concerning anything from customs and religion, to familiar places, to values and moral lessons. Thus, as a largely non-fiction description of Japan by the same author, the ideas presented in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* are revealed in the stories in the folktale-inspired stories of *Kwaidan*. Before presenting these analyses, I have included brief biographical information about Hearn as well as an insight into his literary style in order to offer a broader perspective on his works concerning Japan.

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Author's Statement

Formal education in a foreign language generally progresses on two tracks: the first concerns the study of the language itself and the second concerns studying the culture impacted by that language. Understanding the culture of the target language is essential to obtaining a higher understanding of the language, which has been my experience as a Japanese major at Ball State. In many ways, the journey of 19th century author Lafcadio Hearn from journalist in Ohio to famous author in Japan represents a student's journey from understanding both the language and culture of a different country to truly immersing into its society. Because of this, I chose as my Honors Thesis to examine the impact of Hearn's impressions of 19th century Japan as described in his book *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (1904) on the compilation of his collection of short stories in another volume titled *Kwaidan* (1903).

Hearn's works on Japan and its culture, including *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, were known internationally for offering foreigners a glimpse of Japan. In Japan itself, *Kotto* and *Kwaidan* are well-known collections of Japanese short stories (in both English and Japanese), and Koizumi Yakumo (the name Hearn took when he became a nationalized citizen), is a household name. I have chosen to use these works as a foundation of my thesis because I personally enjoy the short stories Hearn developed and because his works illustrate a story of a foreigner entering into a country and a culture vastly different from his own and coming to appreciate its wonder, which is a metaphor for the educational experience of almost every student of a foreign language.

The purpose of this project was twofold. The first was to expand my knowledge of Japanese vocabulary to higher level of conversation, as well as hone translation skills by analyzing the variations between the semantics of words in English and Japanese. In this, I used

my knowledge of Japanese grammar learned through my education at Ball State as well as consulted various dictionaries and kanji (Japanese character) lists.

The second purpose of my project was to examine through the perspective of a historical figure and his interpretation the language and culture of Japan. This part of the project relied primarily on Hearn's *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, (1904) but was supplemented by various academic articles concerning Hearn and his literary style.

This project helped broaden my educational experience in my major by helping me to understand higher level of Japanese grammar structure and vocabulary, enhancing my translation skills through the use of translation resources, and by refining the decision making involved in translating. Japan is known for blending a wealth of cultural traditions with a modern lifestyle, thus an understanding of Japan's culture in the 19th century will invariably contribute to my deeper understanding of the culture of Japan today. I believe everyone can find something in themselves in Hearn's journey from an outsider to a member of Japanese society, especially those global-minded people intent on the discovery of new cultures and a better understanding of the world we live in.

Part I

Life and Works of Lafcadio Hearn

If one were to look at the best known pictures of Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, one would see a European man standing in native Japanese dress, his face turned to the left to obscure his blind eye. In a black and white photo, this combination seems most unusual. However, this simple photo signifies the journey of one man from a traveling journalist and scholar to the renowned author in Japan known as Koizumi Yakumo. Before his coming to Japan, Hearn was no stranger to travel and immersing himself in different cultures. Born in 1850 in Greece and raised in Ireland, Hearn found himself coming to America at the age of 19 and working as a journalist in Ohio before settling in New Orleans for a few years. During his time in New Orleans, he was able to expand his literary repertoire to include translations of various short stories and other writings. In 1887, he moved to the West Indies to continue his work for *Harpers* magazine. Finally, in 1890, after being sent on another assignment for *Harpers*, Hearn first came to Japan. He would remain there for the rest of his life, after having been married to a Japanese woman and having three children. In 1895, he was naturalized and took his wife's family name, Koizumi. He found employment first as a teacher of English, then at an English magazine, then as a professor of English Literature in Tokyo. He authored several books on Japan before his death in 1905 (Yu, 1964).

Hearn experienced a far from perfect childhood; his parents divorced when he was a small child, and his mother returned to Greece leaving him with a great-aunt in Ireland. There, she had Hearn's brother, James, whom Hearn was never able to meet. His aunt raised him until his late teens; when she was unable to further care for him, she sent him to London, from which he traveled to America in 1869 (Pulvers, 2000). In addition to coming from a broken home,

Hearn experienced hardship due to having parents of two different races. As Pulvers (2000) indicates, his mixed heritage influenced his decision to align himself with the fervent study of sub-cultures different than the dominant European culture, which he especially developed in his time spent in New Orleans. Hearn “did not entertain the prejudices toward people of color that virtually all white Americans harbored” (Pulvers, 2000, para. 7). In fact, in 1874 while still living in Ohio, Hearn illegally married Alethea Foley, a mixed raced woman, against the advice of his colleagues. However, their relationship lasted only a few years (Bronner, 2005).

All of these events contributed to Hearn’s finding it difficult to fit in with the dominant culture of the society in which he lived, and this would send him on a journey to find where he belonged (Pulvers, 2000). His nature has been described as “colorful, imaginative, but morbidly discontented....admired for his sensitive use of language in writing about the macabre and in creating strange exotic moods” (Stevenson, 1961, para. 1). This desire to write about the macabre and things exotic began long before he entered Japan. In fact, while a journalist in Ohio, Hearn was not entirely respected by his colleagues, for “...they did not regard him as a good journalist in the pure sense, feeling he had little interest for real news, relying instead on his ghoulish imagination for impact” (Murray, 1993, p. 23). His reporting on crime was characterized by graphic details, and he “...had not flinched from the most gruesome examination of the corpse” (Murray, 1993, p. 31).

Hearn’s literary style would continue to emphasize all things morbid or other-worldly throughout his work in New Orleans, the West Indies, and into Japan. According to Dawson (1992), the works he authored while living in Japan are anthological in nature, “often speaking of things ghostly” (p. 61). Also, Hearn typically titled his works, “... “glimpses,” “miscellanies,” “attempts,” and “gleanings”...” (p. 61). Dawson (1992) stated further that these names “...imply

at once limited sight on the one hand and stylistic or mnemonic shadings on the other” (p. 61).

The use of these titles and the fractured structure of the works themselves imply that Hearn seemed to believe he only partially understood the culture surrounding him.

Hearn’s wife, Koizumi Setsu, greatly influenced his impressions of Japanese culture and, particularly, the development of his short stories. Setsu would often tell ghost stories to her husband, which was described as “...a peculiar combination of research (taking notes) and entertainment (bated breath)” (Jankiewicz, 2012, p. 345). In this way, Setsu was a mediator for Hearn’s imagination in which she “...performed the work of rendering a text into a sensual experience or a moment of revelation, creating a sense of spiritual transcendence or ghostly horror” (Jankiewicz, 2012, p. 346). Indeed, Setsu’s contributions “were materials without which Lafcadio Hearn might never have established his affinity for Japanese culture” (Jankiewicz, 2012, p. 346). Her input would remain valuable to Hearn as he developed his other works about Japan.

In the short time between his coming to Japan in 1890 and his death in 1905, Hearn wrote about a dozen different works on Japan. He distinguished himself from other Western authors in that while his initial enthrallment with Japanese society was tempered over the years spent there, he nonetheless maintained that “Western superiority is a myth to be challenged, Japanese beauty and grace qualities to be demonstrated” (Dawson, 1992, p. 56). This philosophy occurred at a time during which “Westerners in Japan were fundamentally an imperial presence, protected by the legal authority and military power of their home countries” (Jankiewicz, 2012, p. 364.) Hearn, unlike other foreigners, perceived himself as at once an objective observer of Japanese culture and an advocate of it, whose “...self-awareness as a cross-cultural mediator not only reflected, but actually shaped, his capacity for generating knowledge about Japan” (Jankiewicz, 2012, p. 347). Shortly following his death, Hearn would garner a reputation as an interpreter of Japanese

life to Westerners. While this fame diminished over time, his reputation by the Japanese themselves endured, and they praised him for his interpretation of their culture (Pulvers, 2000).

Because Hearn was simultaneously intimate with Japan and its culture (due in part to his family life) and a foreign interpreter, there is likely a close relationship between the collections of his stories and the specific aspects of Japanese culture that he would eventually write about in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904). The book is a scholarly attempt to analyze different aspects of Japanese culture and society, including the Japanese family structure and Japanese religion. It also describes the impending immigration of Western thought and Western industrialism. Included is a chapter called “The Jesuit Peril” which helps to signify that Hearn thought the “...greatest danger to enter Japan was introduction of Christianity” (Murray, 1993, 293). In contrast, Hearn emphasizes in this work the “...importance of Shinto to Japanese culture-the cornerstone of the book” (Dawson, 1992, p. 291). Hearn himself believed that with this book, he would be “...breaking new ground and the end product would be unique” (Murray, 1992, p. 293). However, Dawson (1992) claims that in many ways, this book represented an older, less adventurous Hearn who had “...admitted to disillusion...” and who created “...a study of religions that was less a tribute to Hearn’s achieved spirituality than a sign of reduced submission, an acceptance of at least partial failure” (p. 58). In any event, there are a large number of scholars who agree that *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* remains Hearn’s finest work (Murray, 1992). There are certain topics in this book that best illustrate the connection between the non-fictional elements and Hearn’s other fictional works, including *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903). There is first the various dynamics of the Japanese family structure, including that of children with their parents, specifically daughters. Hearn also analyzes the impact of religion, specifically Shintoism and Buddhism. Finally, Hearn describes Japanese social organization as

organized into distinct classes, including the military class and the commoners. These various topics as described by *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904) provide valuable insight into Hearn's perspective of Japan.

Part II

Translations

NOTE: Before beginning the analysis of Hearn's short stories, it is worth noting a few observations of Hearn's English version of these tales. First, there are some words in Japanese that cannot be strictly translated into English. This occurrence is apparent in just the titles of the tales; for example, 'mujina' literally means "badger" in Japanese, but the word "badger" cannot be used as the title of the short story because whatever 'mujina' represents in the story, it is not explicitly a badger. Other indications of this are more for cultural explanation than literary decision making. For example, a footnote near the beginning of *Mimi-Nashi-Houichi*, which explains what a *biwa* (a traditional Japanese instrument) is in English, would help western audiences of the early 20th century who had no exposure to Japanese culture understand the story while not having to be confused about which instrument to which the word refers.

However, there are some instances in which it appears the use of Japanese vocabulary is less for the convenience of the reader than Hearn's desire to insert Japanese phrases simply for the aesthetic effect. This use is most apparent in *Mujina*, in which the merchant refers to the young woman as 'o-jochu' (honorable maiden) several times. With someone like myself who has a basic understanding of the culture and language, it is easy to read Japanese vocabulary such as 'o-jochu' without being drawn out of the story. However, a person who has no experience with the Japanese language could be distracted by the overt use of foreign words and might have difficulty trouble understanding. While he does explain the meaning of *o-jochu*, there are other Japanese words in *Mujina* that go unexplained, such as "Kore-Kore!" Hearn could have replaced *kore* with "Ho!" or "Hey!" which would convey the same meaning. These choices are not only

interesting, but indicative of Hearn's comfort with the Japanese language and his willingness to preserve the original Japanese semantics even if writing in English.

貉-*Mujina*

Koizumi Yakumo, 1903

In Tokyo, there is a road heading toward Akasaka called Kinokuni-zaka- meaning the ‘hill of the Kii province.’ Why it is called Kinokuni-zaka-- I don’t know. On one side of this slope, there is a very old moat-- both very wide and very deep; along which rises a high bank, and above that becomes a garden. On the other side of the road, the wall of the imperial palace stretches along one side. Before the time of rickshaws and streetlights, when this area became very dark at night, it becomes quite desolate. A person who was running late, passing through after sunset, he would, rather than ascending Kinokuni-zaka alone, instead take a road that led many miles out of the way.

This is all because in that place, the mujina used to walk.

The last person who saw one of the mujina was an elderly merchant from the Kyoubashii province who died some thirty years ago. He told the story like this....

While this merchant was hurriedly ascending Kinokunizaka one evening, he saw, crouched all alone by the side of the moat, a woman sobbing uncontrollably. He was worried that she might throw herself from the edge, so the merchant stopped, and tried to console her with all that his own power allowed. The woman seemed to be a delicate, graceful person; her garments were beautiful, and her hair was tied in the style of a young woman from a well-to-do family.

“Milady!” the merchant called out as he approached her, “Milady, please don’t cry like that! Tell me what is troubling you! If there is a way I can help you, I will gladly let you know.” (In reality, the man would do as he said he would. This is because this person was incredibly kind.)

However, the woman kept sobbing, her face hidden from the merchant by one of her long sleeves.

“Milady,” as the kind merchant implored again, “Please, please, hear my words! This is not the place where a young woman like yourself should be at night! So please stop crying! Even if I can help a little, please tell me.” Slowly the woman stood up, and with her back to the merchant continued to stifle her wails behind her sleeves. The merchant put his hand on her shoulder and pleaded, “Milady! Milady! Milady! Please hear my words, just for a moment!... Milady!

....Milady!” Then the woman turned. She lowered her sleeves and stroked her face with her hands. He then saw that there were no eyes, no nose, and no mouth. The merchant screamed and ran away.

At full sprint, he ran back up Kinokunizaka. Before him, everything was pitch black and empty. Not having the courage to look back, he continued to run as fast as he could until at last, in the far distance he spotted a light of a lantern like the flickering light of a firefly and ran toward it. It turned out to be the lantern of a soba-seller who had set down his stand to peddle on the side of the road. However, any light and the fellowship of any person was wonderful after the events of before. The merchant threw himself at the feet of the soba-seller, crying, “Ah! Aah!”

“Hey, hey!” gruffly exclaimed the soba seller. “Hey, what’s wrong with you? Were you harmed by someone?”

“No, not harmed,” the merchant said, gasping for breath, “It was only....Aah, Ahh!”

“Only threatened you then?” the soba seller asked coldly. “Thieves?”

“Not thieves, not thieves.” The frightened man answered laboriously, “What I saw...I saw a woman—by the moat— what that woman showed me...Aah! What I saw, I cannot even say it!”

“Humph! Was what she showed you something like this?” the soba seller said, stroking his face...which had become like an egg. At the same moment the lights went out.

雪女-*Yuki Onna*

Koizumi Yakumo, 1903

In a village in the province of Musashi lived two woodcutters named Mosaku and Minokichi. At the time of this tale, Mosaku was an old man. Minokichi though was his 18 year-old apprentice. Every day, they left together to go to a forest situated about one kilometer from the village. On the road to the forest, there is a wide river which they must cross, and there is a ferry. Where the ferry sat, many times a bridge was built; however, whenever it flooded, the bridges would be washed away. They cannot withstand the rising water.

One very cold evening, a snow-storm blew into the path of Mosaku and Minokichi. When they arrived at the ferry, they found that the ferryman had gone and left the boat on the opposite side of the river. It was not a day to swim, so the two woodcutters had taken shelter in the ferryman's cabin. All the while, they thought themselves fortunate to have discovered the refuge. There wasn't a brazier in the cabin, and no place to light a fire either. There was no window and only one entrance, and two tatami mats covered the length of the cabin. Mosaku and Minokichi shut the door, put on raincoats made of straw, and lied down to rest. At first, they did not feel particularly cold, and they thought the storm outside would soon be over.

The old man soon fell asleep. However, for a long time, young Minokichi lied awake, listening to the sound of the horrible wind and the snow pounding the door. The river sounded thunderously. The cabin began to sway and moan as if it were a ship at sea. It was a terrible storm. The air became colder as time passed, and Minokichi began to tremble under his coat. However, in spite of the cold, he too at last fell asleep.

He was awakened by a shower of snow upon his face. The door of the cabin had been forced open. In the light of the snow, he saw in the room a woman, clad entirely white clothing. The woman leaned over Mosaku, breathing upon him, and her breath was like a bright white smoke. Almost at the same time, she turned toward Minokichi and leaned over him. He tried to shout, but he could utter a sound. The woman in white slowly leaned over him until it was as if her face was touching his, then he saw, though her eyes were fierce, she was incredibly beautiful. For a long time she watched him, then woman smiled and whispered, "I thought I would do to you what I did to the other man. But I cannot help but pity you, because you are so young. You are a lovely boy, Minokichi, and I will not harm you. But if you breathe a word of what you saw this evening to anyone, even your own mother, I will know if it, and then I will kill you. Remember what I have told you."

Having spoken so, she turned away, and left through the open door. At that moment, Minokichi realized he could move, so he jumped up, and peered outside. However, he could not see the woman anywhere. The snow began to violently blow inside the house. Minokichi shut the door, and collected several wooden rods to prop against it. He wondered the wind had blown open the door, and if he had only been dreaming. Then he wondered if he had mistaken light of the snow

in the doorway for a figure of a woman in white. He could not be certain. He called for Mosaku. Then he became afraid, for the old man did not answer. In the darkness, he touched Mosaku's face with his hand, and found that it was ice. Mosaku was stiff, and dead.

As dawn approached, the snow storm ended. Shortly after the sun came out, the ferryman returned to the cabin, and he discovered Minokichi collapsed on the side of Mosaku's frozen corpse in. Immediately, Minokichi was cared for, and soon his consciousness returned. However, due to the cold of that dreadful night, he was ill for a long time. He was also still unnerved by the thought of the old man's death. However, he told no one about the appearance of the woman in white. As soon as his health was restored, he returned to his work. Every morning, he went by himself to the forest, and everything he brought home cut wood, and his mother helped to sell them.

One winter evening in the following year, as he was returning home, it happen that on that the same road he came by a young woman. She was tall and slender, and very beautiful. He greeted her, and she answered with a voice like a song bird, which Minokichi found pleasing. He fell in beside her and began conversing with her. She said her name was O-Yuki. Her parents had just passed away, and so she planned to go to Edo, where some of her poor relations lived, and who said they could probably find her a position as a maid-servant.^P Though Minokichi hardly knew her, he began feel as if he had met her before; and the more he looked at her, the more beautiful she seemed. He asked if she were engaged. She laughed and answered that she had no such arrangement. Then she in turn enquired if Minokichi were married, or promised to be married. He answered that he supports his mother, but a question of a wife had not come up as he was still young.^D

After these intimate revelations, they walked a long period without speaking. However, as the old saying goes, when there is feeling, the eyes can say as much as words. By the time they arrived at the village, they had both become very pleased with one another. Then at that time, Minokichi said that O-Yuki should rest awhile at his home. The woman hesitated a moment out of shyness, but soon went there with him. Minokichi's mother welcomed her, then prepared a warm meal for them. O-Yuki's manners were so agreeable that Minokichi's mother was soon taken with her. She advised O-Yuki to delay her journey to Edo. As one might expect, O-Yuki never went to Edo in the end. She stayed to become that home's daughter-in-law.

They found that O-Yuki made a wonderful daughter-in-law.^E Minokichi's mother's last words, as she lie dying, about five years later, were words of affection and praise toward her daughter-in-law.^F O-Yuki bore ten children to Minokichi, all very lovely and had extremely pale skin. All the people in the countryside thought that O-Yuki was different from themselves as if by nature, that she was enchanted. The other peasant women would grow old early, but O-Yuki, even after becoming a mother to ten children, still looked as young and as fresh as she did when she arrived at the village.

One evening after the children had all fallen asleep, O-Yuki was sewing by the light of a lantern.^G Minokichi, gazing at her, said, "When I see you sewing, with the light in your face, I

am reminded of when I was 18 years old, and something extraordinary happened. I saw a lovely, white person that looked just like you do now.”

Without looking up from her work, O-Yuki answered, “Tell me about this person. When did you meet her?”

Then Minokichi told her of the terrible evening at the ferryman’s cabin, and of the white woman who whispered as she smiled, leaning over him, and then of the old man’s silent death. Then he said to her, “Whether I was asleep or awake, I saw a beautiful woman just like you. Only, that was not human. Also, I was very afraid of her. It was horrible...but she was so white! If what I saw was a dream, or else there really was a snow woman, I still do not know.”

O-Yuki leapt up, throwing down her needlework and loomed over the seated Minokichi. “That was me, me, me! That was Yuki!” she screamed into his face. “At that time, I said if you uttered a single word about that, I would kill you!” If it weren’t for the sleeping children there, I would kill you now! But you had better take very, very good care of them from now on. For if they have any reason to complain of you, I will kill you, as you deserve!

In the midst of her cries, the woman’s voice had begun to thin, and became like the cries of the wind. Then she dissolved into a shining mist, which rose up toward the rafters, and passed quivering through the chimney. She was never seen again.

葬られたる秘密-*The Dead Secret*

Koizumi Yakumo, 1903

Long ago in the Tamba Province lived a rich merchant named Inamuraya Gensuke. This man had a daughter named O-Sono. O-Sono was extremely clever, and also very beautiful. Gensuke thought it would be disappointing to let her grow up with only education from instructors from the country.^Q So he arranged to have her go to Kyoto, accompanied by his trusted attendees, to study the elegant accomplishments of ladies of the capital. Then after receiving this education, O-Sono was to be married to a friend of her father's who was a merchant named Nagara. For almost four years, they lived happily together. In that time, they had a child, a son. But then in her fourth year of marriage, O-Sono fell ill and died.

The evening after the funeral, O-Sono's little son said that his mother had come home and was in the room upstairs. O-Sono had looked at him and smiled, but did not speak. The child said he had become frightened and run away. Then, some of the family members went to look in the upstairs room to see if O-Sono was there. They were astonished, for in the light before a shrine in the room, in front of the dresser in the room, they could see the figure of the dead mother.^H O-Sono appeared to be standing in front of a dresser, which contained a box that still held her ornaments and clothes. O-Sono's head and shoulders could clearly be seen, but from her lower back her form slowly became fainter. It was an imperfect image of herself, like the transparent reflection on the water's surface.

Then the people became frightened and left the room.^A Downstairs, they gathered and fell into discussion. O-Sono's mother-in-law said "Women love their sundries, and O-Sono was attached to her things. Perhaps she has returned to see them. Many of the dead have done things like that—if the articles are not taken to the temple. If we offer O-Sono's things to the temple, perhaps her spirit will be able to find rest."^B

They all concluded that this should be done as soon as possible. The next morning, the drawers were emptied, and O-Sono's ornaments and clothes were taken to the temple. However, O-Sono was seen again in front of the dresser the very next night, then the next night also, and the next night after that—every night she came, and thus the house became a haunted house.

The mother of O-Sono's husband went to the temple, told the temple's chief priest the entire tale, and asked for advice concerning the specter. That temple was a Zen Temple, and that chief priest was an old, accomplished scholar, known as Daigen Oshou.^I "Without a doubt, there is something inside the dresser or close to it to which the woman feels attached," the chief priest answered.

"And yet, we emptied the dresser, so there is nothing left in the drawers anymore."

“Well then, I shall come to your home this evening and keep watch of the room.^C There, I will sit and ponder of what should be done. Please ask that no one comes into the room while I keep watch unless called for.”

After sunset, Daigen Oshou went to the house, and found that the room was prepared for him. He then sat there all alone, reading the sutras.^J Until well after midnight, nothing had appeared. However, as if at an appointed time, the form of O-Sono appeared in front of the dresser more clearly than before. With a forlorn look upon her face, her eyes were fixed on the dresser.

The priest recited sutras prepared for situations like this,^K then turned to the figure and called to her by her burial name.^L “I am sitting here in order to help you. Surely, it is probable that inside that dresser is something that worries you. Shall I look for you?” The shadowy figure moved her head slightly, seemingly nodding in acquiescence. Then the priest stood up, opened the topmost drawer and looked inside. There, he found nothing. He continued to open the second, third, and fourth drawers. However, they were all empty as well. He carefully searched behind and underneath the drawers—he carefully examined the inside of the drawer. Nothing! Yet, O-Sono’s figure gazed fixedly at the dresser just as before. *I wonder what she could want?* thought the priest. Suddenly, he noticed what that could possibly be. There might be something hidden underneath the paper that lined the inside of the drawers. He then began to peel back the paper inside the first drawer—nothing! Then he peeled back the paper of the second and third drawer, still nothing. However, he discovered something underneath the paper lining of the bottom drawer. It was a letter. “I wonder if this is what has been troubling you?” The priest enquired. The ghostly figure turned toward the priest and fixed its weak gaze on the letter. “Shall I burn this for you?” the priest asked her. O-Sono’s ghost nodded her head to him. “As soon as it’s morning I will burn it, and no one but me shall ever read this.” The priest promised. The figure smiled at him, then faded away.

Dawn was breaking when the priest went down the stairs, and the family waited anxiously below. “Please do not worry. The figure will not appear again.” The priest said, addressing them. And as expected, O-Sono’s ghostly figure did not appear ever again.

The letter was burned. It was a love letter O-Sono had received when she was a studying in Kyoto.^R However, what was written inside it only the priest knew, and the secret was buried with him.

耳無芳一の話-*The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Houichi*

Koizumi Yakumo, 1903

In older times, over 700 years ago, at Dan-No-Ura in the straits of Shinoseki, the last great battle between the long feuding Heiki, or Taira, clan and the Genji, or Minamoto, clan, was fought. The kin of the Heiki clan, its women and children, and even the young emperor, known today as Antoku Tenno, perished there. That beach and sea have since been cursed by the spirits of the dead for 700 years. In other places, I have spoken of the mysterious crab called the Heike crab, who bear a human face on their back said to be the spirits of Heike warriors. However, there are many mysterious things that can be observed on this beach. On a dark night, thousands of flames of the dead wander, or else fly about flickering above the waves. These pale lights are called *onibi*, or demon fires, by the fisherman. When the wind rises, a great sound can be heard like the cries of battle coming from the sea.

In earlier years, the people of the Heike clan were more restless than now. At night, they would appear standing upon passing ships, and try to sink them, or would always wait expectantly for swimmers to try to pull them under. In order to console the dead, the Buddhist temple Amadaji was erected in Amakagaseki; a cemetery was also established near the shore, and in it were built monuments engraved with the names of the drowned emperor and his illustrious retainers; and for the spirits of these people, Buddhist masses were regularly held here. In the years after this temple was built and the cemetery created, the people of the Heike clan caused less calamity than before. Nonetheless, they continued to do strange things occasionally, which serves as proof that they were unable to obtain final peace.

Some 100 years ago, a blind man named Houichi lived at Amakagaseki. This man was famous for his skill at recitation and playing upon the biwa. Since he was a child, he had been trained to recite and play, and while still a young man, he surpassed his teachers. He became famous at his occupation as a biwa-playing monk for the recitation of the legend of the Heike and the Genji; and it is said that when he sang the song of the battle of Dan-No-Ura, even the fiercest gods could not hold back their tears.

In the beginning of his successful career, Houichi was very poor; however, he had a kind friend who wanted to assist him. This was the chief priest of the Amadaji temple, and because he was fond of music and poetry, he often invited Houichi to come play and recite at the temple. Soon, the priest greatly admired this skill of this young man, and told Houichi to think of the temple as his own home. Houichi accepted this request with many thanks. Then Houichi was given one room in the temple, as well as meals and lodging. In return, he was only requested to play the biwa and recite poetry for the head priest when he was unoccupied.

One summer night, the head priest was called away to perform a Buddhist ceremony at the home of a parishioner who had just died. He went taking his assistant, leaving Houichi alone in the temple. That was a hot summer evening, and Houichi thought he would try to cool himself, and so went out onto the veranda. This veranda overlooked a small garden in the back Amidaji temple. There Houichi tried to relieve his solitude by practicing the biwa. Midnight passed, however, without the priest's return. The air was still hot, making it impossible to relax indoors, so Houichi remained outside. Before long, he heard the sound of footsteps approaching from the back gate. Someone had crossed into the garden and soon came to a halt right in front of Houichi. However, it was not the head priest. A harsh voice suddenly called his name, like a samurai addressing his subordinates.^N

"Houichi!"

Startled, Houichi did not respond for a moment, but then the harsh voice called again the manner of giving a command:

"Houichi!"

"Yes!" Houichi responded, frightened by the intimidating voice, "I am blind! I cannot know who is calling to me!"

The stranger, softening his words, spoke again, "There is nothing to be frightened of. I am stopping at this temple, and have come to deliver a message. My lord, a man of considerably high rank, is now staying at Amidaji with many noble retainers in order to see the place of the battle of Dan-No-Ura, and today, he visited there. He has heard that you are skillful at reciting this part of the tale of the Heike. His desire is to hear your performance of it, thus you and your biwa shall come directly with me to the house where the noble assembly is waiting.

In those days, if a samurai issued a command, there would be no opposing him.^O Thus Houichi slipped on his sandals, took the biwa he had been playing, and left with the stranger, who gripped his shoulder deftly as they walked. However, Houichi had to walk in a fast pace, and the hand that guided him had a grip like iron. The clattering sound of the warrior's footsteps soon proved him to be fully armed. He was surely a palace guard. Houichi's initial fear had gone, and he began to think himself fortunate. He remembered what the retainer had said about his folk being of considerably high rank, and thought that the request to hear his recital was made by no less than a daimyo of the first class.^S At length, the samurai came to a halt, Houichi discerned that they had reached a large gateway. However, he thought it odd, because he could not remember there being another large gate in this area other than the one at Amidaji. The samurai called out, "Open the gate!" The gate groaned as it opened, and they entered. They stopped in front of an entrance that opened to a spacious garden

Then the retainer called loudly, "To those inside! I have brought Houichi." Then Houichi heard the sound of quick footsteps, and of screen doors sliding, rain-doors opening, and of women in conversation as he came in. From what he gathered from the women's conversation, he guessed that they must be servants of a noble house. However, he had no inkling of what place he had been brought. He was not concerned with this at any rate. When he had been helped up a flight

of stairs, at the very top step of which he was told to take off his shoes, he was led by a woman's hand through a polished hallway that seemed endless, around countless pillars, over widths of amazing tatami mats—and to the center of a large room.

Houichi thought there was a large crowd of people gathered there. The sound of rustling silk was like the sound of the leaves of trees in a forest. Then he heard the murmur of people talking, speaking in low tones the language of the imperial court. Houichi was told to make himself comfortable, and he noticed a cushion was provided for him. As he took his seat, he began to tune his biwa when a woman's voice, whom he guessed must be the lady in charge of the female servants, turned and addressed Houichi, "Now, it is requested that you will recite for us the tale of the Heike clan, accompanied by the biwa."

Well, to thoroughly recite the entirety of the tale could take several nights. So Houichi ventured to enquire, "As it would be difficult to recite the entire tale, which part is your lord's wish to hear?"

The woman answered. "Please recite the tale of the Battle of Dan-No-Ura, which incites our deepest pity."

And thus Houichi raised his voice, and chanted the song of the violent naval battle, using the biwa wonderfully to sound the pulling of oars and the advancing ships, the crack of arrows whirring by, the cries of men trampling and the clang of swords striking armor, and the falling of the slain into the sea. At the pauses in his musical performance, he heard whispered voices of admiration from the left and right of him. "What a splendid biwa master!" "There isn't a player like this in our own province!" "Nowhere throughout the land is there another singer like Houichi!" it was said. Then with a renewed courage, Houichi sang with even more skill than before. Around him, all fell silent in wonder. But in the end, when he told the fate of the lovely and the helpless—the women and children—and at the moment of drowned death of Nii-no-Ama, with the infant emperor in her arms was recited, everyone together gave a long shuddering cry of anguish, and then they began to weep with such intense bitterness that Houichi became frightened of the grieving response he had created. For some time, the sobbing continued unbroken. However, eventually, the sounds of lamentation slowly died away, and then in the great silence that followed Houichi heard the woman in charge say:

"We have heard that you were a master of the biwa, and unequalled in the art of recitation, yet we had never thought we would hear such skill as you have demonstrated this evening. Our lord has been pleased to declare that he will bestow upon you his deepest gratitude. However, he requests to have you play in his presence once every night for each of the following six nights, after which my lord will perhaps make his return journey. Therefore, please proceed here at the same time tomorrow. The retainer who brought you will be sent again for you. There is one more thing I have been instructed to inform you. Of our lord's stay at Amakagaseki, and of your coming here, you are asked to speak of to no one. As our lord is traveling in secret, he commands that you do not reveal anything of these things. You are now free to return to your temple."

After Houichi sufficiently expressed his gratitude, the woman's hand guided him back to the gate at the entrance, where the same retainer who guided him here was waiting to take him home. The retainer brought him to the veranda at the back of the temple and bid him farewell.

Houichi returned before daybreak. His return went unnoticed at the temple, as the high priest, who returning at a late hour, assumed him to be sleeping. Houichi was able to rest during the day, and said not a word of the mysterious affair. During the next night, the samurai came again to meet Houichi, and took him to the noble assembly. There Houichi again gave the same recitation, earning the same success as it had previously. However, upon returning to the temple from this second trip he was accidentally discovered. In the morning, he was summoned in front of the chief priest who in a gentle but firm tone asked, "Houichi, we have been very concerned for you. It is dangerous for you to go out, blind and alone, so late at night. Why did you leave without informing us? I could have sent someone with you. Then again, where did you go?"

Houichi replied evasively, "My lord priest, please forgive me! I had a minor business to attend to that could not be arranged at any other hour."

The priest was surprised, rather than worried, at Houichi's silence. It seemed unnatural, and he sensed then that something was wrong. He wondered if the blind young man was possibly possessed or had been deceived by a demon. He did not inquire any further, but secretly instructed the temple menservants to watch Houichi's movements, and if he left the temple after dark to follow after him.

Soon that following evening, the servants saw Houichi exiting the temple, and at once lit a lantern and followed after him. However, it was a rainy evening, and very dark; before the temple-folks could reach the road, Houichi had disappeared. Surely, Houichi walked swiftly, which was strange considering his blindness. The men quickly passed through the town, inquiring at the houses that Houichi frequented; however, no one had seen him. At last, they were returning to the temple by the road near the shore when they were all startled by the sound of the biwa being furiously played, coming from the center of the Amidaji cemetery. Other than two or three demon fires, like those that customarily flickered around there, there was total darkness in that direction.

The men hurriedly went over the cemetery, where in the light of the lantern, they discovered Houichi sitting in the middle of the rain, in front of the memorial of Antoku Tenno, rigorously strumming his biwa and loudly chanting the tale of the battle of the Dan-No-Ura. Behind him and about him, and everywhere above the tombs, many spirit fires of the dead burned like candles. Never before had so many of the spirit fires appeared before humans.

"Houichi! Houichi!" The servants called to him, "You have been bewitched by something! Houichi!"

However, it seemed the blind man did not hear them. With all his strength, Houichi sounded his biwa with ringing and clanging. With more and more intensity, he chanted the song of the Dan-No-Ura battle. The men seized Houichi and shouted into his ear, "Houichi! Houichi! Come home with us immediately!"

Houichi turned toward the men and said, "To hinder me in such a fashion in front of this noble assembly is unpardonable!"

In spite of the weirdness of the situation, the men could not help but laugh, for surely Houichi was indeed bewitched. They then seized him and pulled him to his feet, with all their strength, hurriedly brought him back to the temple. There the chief priest ordered him out of his wet clothes and made to eat and drink. Then the priest resolved to press Houichi for a sufficient explanation of his strange conduct.

Houichi hesitated for a while to speak of it. However, after finally realizing that he had worried and angered the kind priest, he determined to break his silence, and told him everything that happened beginning with the moment the samurai appeared.

Then the chief priest said, "You poor man! Houichi, you are in serious danger! It's unfortunate that you did not inform me of your situation before! Your musical performance has a truly drawn you into strange hardship. You must know that you were by no means ever visiting any folk's home, but were actually among the graves of the Heike, and you have been spending your nights there. This evening, the servants discovered you sitting alone in the rain in front of the memorial tomb of Antoku Tenno. Everything you imagined you saw was an illusion, other than the visit from the dead.

By once attending the dead's call, you now belong to them. Now if you were to obey them again, after what has happened, they will tear you limb from limb. They would have killed you sooner or later in any case. This evening, I cannot stay with you, for I am once again called to perform a service. However, before I go, I will write holy sutras upon your body in order to protect it."

Before sunset, the priest along with his assistant stripped Houichi, and then with their brushes, they copied on his chest, back, face and neck, his hands and feet, and all throughout his body, even on the soles of his feet—the phrases of holy scripture known as the Hannya-Shin-Kyo, or the Heart sutra.^M When they finished, the priest instructed Houichi,

"Tonight, as soon as I leave, sit on the veranda and wait. Then, they will call for you. But no matter what happens, do not reply and do not move. You must wait in silence, as if meditating. If you move, or make the slightest sound, you will be torn apart. Do not be frightened, or try to call for assistance, as no one could help you. If you do exactly as I have said, the danger will pass, and you will have nothing more to fear."

After the sun had set, the priest and his assistant left. Houichi seated himself on the veranda, just as the priest had instructed. He placed his biwa close him on the planking, and took the position of meditating, and became quite still. He breathed low as not to be heard, and took care not to cough. And for a long time he thus waited. Then from the direction of the road, he heard footsteps approaching. The footsteps passed through the gate, crossed the garden, drew near to the veranda, and stopped- right in front of Houichi.

"Houichi!" the deep voice called. But the blind man held his breath and sat in silence.

“Houichi!” Once again the voice called. Then it called a third time, quite fiercely, “Houichi!” But Houichi remained as still as a stone- and so the voice grumbled, “No reply! This is no good. I must see where the fellow went.”

There were sounds of footsteps climbing onto the veranda. The footsteps slowly approached, and stopped close to Houichi. For several moments, there was complete silence, in which Houichi felt his whole body trembling to his heartbeat.

At last, the harsh voice muttered close by him, “There is the biwa, but of the biwa master, there are only two ears! It is no wonder there was no response, there is no mouth respond with. There is nothing left of him except the ears. Well, I will take these ears to my lord, as evidence that I obeyed his orders.”

At that moment, Houichi felt fingers like iron grasp his ears, then tear them off. The pain was exceeding, but nonetheless he did not cry out. The steps retreated back off the veranda, through the garden, out to the road, and disappeared. Houichi felt a thick warm substance oozing from both sides of his head, but he did not dare lift his hands.

The priest returned before daybreak. Immediately, he hurried to the veranda, where he slipped treading on something stick, and uttered a cry of horror. In the light of his lantern, he saw that the sticky substance was blood. But he recognized Houichi sitting there still, in the meditative position, with blood pouring from his wounds.

“Poor Houichi!” frightened, the priest cried out. “How did this happen, have you been injured?”

The blind man was relieved by the sound of his friend’s voice, and he began to sob. While in tears, he related the evening’s events. “Poor, poor Houichi!” the priest exclaimed. It is all my fault, my grievous oversight. Everywhere on your body the sutras had been written, everywhere but your ears! I had thought my assistant had surely written them there, but it was wrong of me not to check to be sure! Well, it cannot be helped, except to treat your injuries as soon as possible. Houichi, be glad! The danger has truly gone. Never again shall such visitors trouble you.”

With the help of a good doctor, Houichi’s injuries healed before long. Word of these mysterious events spread, and almost at once Houichi became famous. Many a noble person went to Amidaji temple to hear him recite. Then Houichi received gifts of money, and soon he became a wealthy man. However, since the time of these strange events, he was known thereafter as Mimi-nashi-Houichi, or “Houichi the Earless.”

Part III

Analysis of Translations

Several cultural aspects of Japan described in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904) appear in the short stories (based off Japanese folktales) collected in Hearn's other works. Specifically, there are several topics in the book, including the structure of the Japanese family, religion, and structure of society, that become apparent through the progression of these tales. As with the folktales of any culture, these stories, though collected and sometimes written by individual authors, are nonetheless based on tales produced by and for the people. Thus, one can learn about the various aspects of a certain culture by studying folktales. Because Hearn is both a scholar of Japanese culture as well as a folklorist, many of the cultural aspects that he observed are revealed in these short stories. In this section, I will highlight some important comments Hearn makes concerning Japanese society in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904) and provide examples of where this commentary is found in the different tales I have translated. Particularly, I will be examining three different topics, derived from three sections of Hearn's book, and comparing the elements in those to the events, characters, and setting in the stories I translated from *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903).

The Japanese family

As stated in Part I, Hearn (1904) focuses on the influence of religion on Japanese society. It comes as no surprise then that Hearn states, "The great general idea, the fundamental idea, underlying every persistent ancestor-worship, is that the welfare of the living depends upon the welfare of the dead" (Hearn, 1904, p. 54). According to Hearn, the fundamental society unit, that

is the structure of the household, hinged upon this idea that the ancestors of the household be worshiped. He states that:

The all important necessity for the ghost was sacrificial worship; the all-important necessity for the man was to provide for the future cult of his own spirit, and to die without the assurance of a cult was the supreme calamity...remembering these facts we can understand better the organization of the patriarchal family- shaped to maintain and to provide for the cult of its dead, any neglect of which cult was believed to involve misfortune. (p. 55)

While *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903) is a collection of ghost stories, and would by nature include the presence of the dead, there is still plenty of examples of people in the tales who are concerned for the welfare of their deceased ancestors. One example of this is in the *The Dead Secret* in which the family of O-Sono is greatly concerned with her continued presence in her bedroom long after she had died.^A Not only as a family do they go upstairs after the little boy claimed to have seen her, after having confirmed that her ghost was there, they all came back down stairs to have a practical discussion of what to do about it. This discussion cumulates in O-Sono's mother-in-law stating that perhaps taking her things to the temple will put her spirit to rest.^B When that didn't work, they were to call in a priest to see if he could put O-Sono's spirit to rest.^C The priest was not called in to excise a ghost because the family was afraid of O-Sono, but out of genuine concern of the spirit's welfare. This relates to the idea that the well-being of the ancestors, even after death, are a serious family concern.

The example of O-Sono's haunting illustrates another aspect of the Japanese family Hearn mentions in this section, which concerns a woman's place in the household after she is married. Hearn (1904) states that, "Woman shared the cult but she could not maintain it. Besides,

the daughters of the family, being destined, as a general rule, to marry into other households, could bear only a temporary relation to the home-cult” (p. 58). This means that once a woman is married, she is essentially adopted into her husband’s family. While this doesn’t necessarily entail that she be cut off from her own family, it does mean that she begin to worship the ancestors of her husband, and that she will in turn be considered an ancestor of his family when she died. Thus, though it is more commonly the husband’s responsibility, from Hearn’s perspective, it is natural that in the case of O-Sono, her mother in law took charge in trying to put her soul to rest.

Hearn also utilizes this important relationship between the daughter-in-law and her adoptive family when he described the relationship between O-Yuki and Minokichi and his mother in *Yuki Onna*. First, he retained the integrity of the meaning of the word ‘*o-yome*’ when he describes it in the English version as ““honorable daughter-in-law”” instead of simply “wife” (Hearn, 1903).^{D1} This in of itself signifies that Hearn was aware that the daughter-in-law occupied a special role in the family of her husband. This relationship is further explained with the additional details praising O-Yuki’s transition into the family in which they could find no fault.^E O-Yuki’s contributions to the family are further exemplified the praise Minokichi’s mother has for her on her deathbed,^F and even by O-Yuki completing the domestic task of sewing.^G

Hearn’s experience as a scholar of Japan is unique in that he was an interpreter of its culture and customs for foreigners, yet he also participated extensively in Japanese society. Hearn describes Japanese society from the familial unit to society as a whole. Hearn had firsthand experience of the Japanese family in particular, as he was married to a Japanese woman

¹ However, I did not use that phrasing my translation of *Yuki Onna*.

and adopted into her family. Whether or not his own personal experience is demonstrated in Hearn (1904), or in the short stories of *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903), he nonetheless was able to incorporate observations of the family structure and its dynamics into the short stories, particularly those of the daughter-in-law and her husband's family. Not forgotten is Hearn's notion of the strong impact of ancestor worship on the structure of the family and the roles of individual family members.

Religion in Japan

Another section of *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* dealt with the introduction of Buddhism to Japan and the transformative impact it had on its culture. According to Hearn (1904), Buddhism "...brought to Japan another and a wider humanizing influence-new gospel of tenderness" that was able to integrate itself into the preexisting belief systems dominated by Shintoism, in spite of "...fundamental dissimilarity." (p. 179). In fact, the Buddhism that grew in Japan accepted the deities of Shintoism "...with all their attributes and dignities- declaring them incarnations of buddhas or bodhisattvas" (p. 181). Hearn also credits Buddhism for "[giving] to Japan the arts and industries of China. Architecture, painting, sculpture, engraving, printing, gardening...developed first in Japan under Buddhist teaching" (p. 179). Regardless of whether Hearn's assertions as to the extent of Buddhism influence, Buddhism and its belief system could logically have a large presence in Japanese ghost stories, since Japanese Buddhism almost certainly concerns the keeping of the dead.

Because of its relationship with caring for the dead, Buddhist imagery and customs are prevalent throughout the short stories in *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903). The presence of Buddhism in *The Dead Secret* is apparent in many instances, for example, by the description of the lamp before the shrine in O-Sono's room.^H Then when the family must do something about O-Sono's

ghost, the first action thought of concerns taking her things to the family temple, which happens to be a Zen temple.¹ Also, Daigen Osho, the head priest who was requested to help with O-Sono's ghost, is well versed with the dealings with the dead. He is able to perform a reading of sutras,^J chant the sutra in response to the ghost's appearance,^K and call O-Sono by her burial name.^{L2}

These various Buddhist images and customs also frequently appear in *Mimi-Nashi Houichi*. Houichi lives in a temple, and his good friend is a priest. When it was discovered that he had encountered ghosts and was bewitched, the priest and his help did what they could to protect him from the dead by writing the sutras all over his body.^M The image of priests studying sutras and performing rites would be familiar to a Japanese audience, even as it would seem foreign to a non-Japanese audience. While there is certainly a distinction between the religion of Buddhism and the Buddhist practices in ghost stories, they are nonetheless rooted in very prevalent beliefs in Japanese culture as prescribed by Hearn (1904).

One of the unique aspects of Hearn (1904) is Hearn's particular emphasis of the impact of religion on Japanese society. He expands on the core notion of ancestor worship by describing the two major religions of Japan at the time: Shintoism and Buddhism. According to Hearn, Japan's society would be nearly impossible to understand without first understanding the importance of these religions. The ghost stories in *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903), which include various encounters with spirits in the afterlife, would also include some evidence of this importance of religion, particularly Buddhism. Hearn's knowledge of Buddhism and its practices is demonstrated through the detailing of various elements such as temples, priests, and sutras.

² Hearn describes this name, known as *kaimyo*, in detail in a footnote in *Kwaidan*. Because he had a Buddhist funeral, he too was given a *kaimyo*, which is translated as "Believing Man Similar to Undefined Flower Blooming like Eight Rising Clouds, Who Dwells in Mansion of Right Enlightenment" (Yu, 1964, 294).

Through the characters' actions in the ghost stories, Hearn is able to give insight into the prevalence of Buddhism and its importance in Japanese society. Though the use of Buddhism to banish ghosts is fictional, other aspects in the short stories, such as the priests' work at the temples, are not. Hearn's perspective of the importance of religion on Japanese culture and society certainly is revealed through these descriptions.

Social organization

The social organization described by Hearn (1904) reveals a history of Japan that spans centuries, from the development of the samurai class to the Japan at the turn of the 20th century, with which Hearn was familiar. Hearn (1904) describes the revival of the military class, known as *buke*, which was characterized the shogunate's rule over various feudal lords known as daimyo, who at one point numbered around three hundred. This number is small in comparison to the total number of samurai of all levels which numbered about two million. These samurai were "exempted from taxation, and privileged to wear two swords" (Hearn, 1904, p. 229).

During the height of their influence, samurai were not to be disobeyed. Indeed, the common folk were compelled to pay heed to the samurai's wishes. This could be why Houichi so readily allowed himself to be whisked away by the retainer in *Mimi-Nashi Houichi*, whom he believed to be like a samurai.^N As stated in the story, "if a samurai issued a command, there would be no opposing him."^O It also follows that the ghost of the samurai who served the Heike still served his lords even in death. As Hearn would mention in a later section of *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, in which he describes in detail the customs of the samurai, "to his divinely descended lord, the retainer owed everything-in fact, not less than in theory, goods, household, liberty, and life.....duty to the lord, like the duty to the family ancestry, did not cease

with death (Hearn, 1904, p. 269)". The samurai in *Mimi-Nashi Houichi* still followed his lord's orders, as he wanted to prove by bringing back the only part of Houichi he could find: his ears.

Also described in this section of *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* is the division of the majority of society underneath the samurai. The "bulk of the common people were divided into three classes: farmers, artisans, and merchants" (Hearn, 1904, 231). Among these, farmers were ranked the highest in terms of social class, followed by artisans. Below these were the "...bankers, merchants, shopkeepers and traders...the lowest officially recognized. The business of money making was held in contempt by the superior classes..." (Hearn, 1904, p. 234). The ghost stories of *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903) consist of characters from all of the various social classes, from samurai, to merchants and artisans, to even feudal lords, all of whom are figures that would be present in the backdrop of folklore as they are in Japanese society.

With the exception of *Mimi-Nashi-Houichi*, a majority of the characters in these particular ghost stories represent common folk who may occasionally interact someone from the upper-class. For example, the central character in *Mujina* is a merchant, who encounters a wealthy girl and a seller of soba noodles. Of course in the story, these turn out to be 'mujina,' spirits who are only impersonating people. Still, the story shows a character interacting with members of different social classes. Similarly, Minokichi, the central character in *Yuki Onna* is a wood-cutter's apprentice who could be considered as participating in a trade. When he encounters O-Yuki (before she is revealed to be a spirit), she is on her way to see family in Edo (Tokyo) to get employment as a maid servant.^P It is unlikely she would be able to do anything else, unless she married.

In addition, the consciousness of ones' class is also demonstrated in the story *The Dead Secret*. In the beginning of the story, O-Sono's father wants to send her to Kyoto (a large city) to

earn a higher class education than she would receive from her provincial home.^Q Also, O-Sono was already betrothed to another merchant, who would also be of similar social status, and thus a suitable match. As revealed through the letter at the end of the story, O-Sono might have loved someone else before her marriage.^R It is possible that even from beyond the grave, O-Sono was concerned that the implications of this relationship would be shameful to her family if revealed to them.

The story of *Mimi-Nashi-Houichi* contains the widest range of characters from varying social classes. Houichi is an artist, known for reciting poetry and playing the *biwa*. He lives in a Buddhist temple at the request of his friend, who is a priest. The spirits he interacts with are revealed to be members of the Heike clan, whose entire household is accounted for through the inclusion of the characters of the retainer who is a samurai and the woman in charge of the servants, and by mentioning the lord of the assembly. Though unaware that he was interacting with spirits, Houichi knew that he was in the presence of nobility, and thought that the home he visited must have belonged to a *daimyo*.^S Even in this ghost story, the interactions between the classes are as complex as would be in Japanese society.

The dynamic interaction between the various social classes of Japan is a complex topic; however, Hearn is able to dissect its structure and produce a general perspective of Japanese society. Hearn highlights various characteristics that are likely different from the experience of a Western audience, including the rise of the samurai and the fact that farmers were considered of higher class than merchants and traders. Also, the concept of a *biwa* player who performs recitations of poetry would be particularly different to a non-Japanese. In contrast, this class structure would be very familiar to a Japanese audience if it were to manifest in a short story, such as those in *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903). The wide-ranging characters of priests, merchants,

woodcutters, and others, as well as their positions in society, would be reoccurring characters in folktales. Using the same social structure already familiar to the Japanese, Hearn uses these characters not only to tell the actual story, but to also illustrate this complicated interaction between different members of society. Thus, Hearn's perspective on the topic of social organization continues to appear in the short stories in *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903).

Outside of the topics of the Japanese family, religion, and social organization are several story elements that are also representative of Hearn's impressions of Japan and Japanese culture. This includes an understanding of different stories in Japan, such as the Japanese provinces in *Yuki Onna* and *The Dead Secret* and medieval Tokyo, all understood well not only by Hearn, but also the Japanese. There is also his understanding of Japanese historical events, such as the Battle of Dan-No-Ura, a famous naval battle of the 10th century. After comparing the informative content of Hearn (1904) and the stories of *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903), one can see the relationship between Hearn's perspective on Japan and the elements of the stories. For the Japanese family, Hearn observed a system concerned with ancestor worship, working together as a group, and the relationship between daughters and their families. Hearn also not only closely observed evidence of the influence Buddhism apparent in Japanese society, he also believed that Buddhism had a changing impact on Japanese society itself. Thus, the short stories contain characters, places, and rituals all concerning Buddhism. Finally, his impressions gleaned from observing Japanese society are shown through the interaction between characters from all different levels of Japanese society that he believed to be distinct classes with various social standings. Hearn's understanding of the various aspects of Japanese culture and customs are evident in the four short stories analyzed in *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903).

Part IV

Conclusion

Even to a nomadic wanderer like Lafcadio Hearn, Japan represented a wondrous place with completely unfamiliar cultural and societal customs. He wrote in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904) that the remnants of a feudal Japan still impacted the shape of society, to the extent that Japan "...indeed was Elf-land- the strange, the beautiful, the grotesque, the very mysterious- totally unlike aught of strange and attractive ever beheld elsewhere" (Hearn, 1904, p. 364). Hearn himself and others believed that he was a communicator of this strange "Elf-land" to the rest of the world, and he did this by not only authoring scholarly books on Japan, but also through the creation of stories in the manner of folktales. When Hearn collected the short story *Yuki Onna*, he said that "he made this discovery in a characteristic way, from an ordinary Japanese person, as if were collecting folklore" (Murray, 1992, p. 99). Hearn viewed himself in this case not just as someone strictly creating the short stories, but as a person merely collecting what he observed in the society surrounding him. This is just one of many examples in which the short stories of *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903) and other works were significantly influenced by the vast wealth of culture already existing that Hearn observed.

After an analysis of the ideas addressed in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904), the connection between Hearn's impressions of Japanese society becomes apparent throughout the various elements of the short stories. *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (Hearn, 1904) might be a representation of Hearn as the observer of Japanese society, but through the creation of *Kwaidan* (Hearn, 1903), he went beyond merely interpreting a culture but to actually emanating the culture himself through these short stories. Thus, when completing a study of Lafcadio Hearn, one can see how the man should be considered not only as an outsider or

foreigner, merely relating what he sees, but as an active member of Japanese society actually internalizing what he observes and creating fiction out of this internalization. This perspective will help one understand the contribution of Lafcadio Hearn as more than an interpreter of Japanese culture, but also as a wonderful story-teller.

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